



The Community Support Initiative: A Model National Project to Prove the Effectiveness of Alternatives to Immigration Detention

- **Immigration detention is costly and growing.** The use of detention has skyrocketed over recent years. In the current system, the government spends \$2 billion of taxpayers' money to lock up as many people as the population of Atlanta—close to 450,000 every year.
- **LIRS created a national model that can test the internationally accepted theory of community-based alternatives to detention.** Our project challenges the very premise of detention—that a person must be imprisoned to comply with the law. With this demonstration project, we will make it clear and evident that our model of an alternative to detention serves the interests of the government while also protecting due process and ensuring immigrants have a fair chance for justice.
- **Community-Based Alternatives balance the government's need for compliance with migrants' rights to a fair chance at justice and integration.** Community-based models operated by nonprofit organizations around the world have demonstrated high rates of compliance and appearance, greater fairness in immigration hearings, and improved health, wellbeing and integration outcomes for participants – all at a reduced cost to the government.
- **Immigration and Customs Enforcement is working with LIRS to release immigrants from detention into this model.** LIRS entered into a unique, unfunded contract with ICE in June 2013 to coordinate release and track key measurables, including cost and compliance. Currently, ICE refers immigrants with specific vulnerabilities to our service partners in four of our seven pilot sites.
- **LIRS can access a unique set of data through our local partnerships and expert evaluation.** In seven communities—Arizona, Austin/San Antonio, Boston, Chicago, the New York Metro area, Seattle, and the Twin Cities—LIRS has built coalitions of local service partners that provide legal services, case management, and housing. We also track referral practices and compliance rates for participants to assess the model's effectiveness in meeting ICE's enforcement goals, and we are studying the program costs to show that alternatives cost substantially less than the government currently spends on detention.
- **LIRS brings together key stakeholders to ensure the success of the Alternatives to Detention Project in addition to our partnership with ICE.** To strengthen our evaluation, we are working with Dr. Court Robinson at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health. Our

partners represent legal and social service experts in the field of detention, and LIRS brings the support of the faith community, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the Presbyterian Church (USA). With a history of effective advocacy through influential coalitions, we also work with advocacy allies in Washington and around the country.

- **Our track record of success shows that LIRS can produce real and lasting change.** Since the 1980s, LIRS has been on the forefront of confronting the rise of immigration detention—building a network of legal service providers, connecting the experts in the field, and providing services for immigrants impacted by detention. Because of our 30 years of services around detention, we have access to data that no one else has and the expertise to leverage that evidence for policy change. Past projects have led to the Legal Orientation Program, now operated by the Vera Institute of Justice, and the Detention Watch Network, which has grown into a critical national advocate for just policies.
- **Now is the right time for reform.** This is a pivotal moment—for immigration policy and for this project. LIRS has the cooperation of ICE, a scalable model, and a coalition of partners committed to transforming the immigration enforcement system. In five years—with or without immigration reform—LIRS’s model can lead to a federally funded alternative to detention program. This model could eliminate the arbitrary use of detention, ensure due process, give immigrants access to justice, and substantively help them integrate.
- **Congress can take action now** by passing common-sense reforms that will keep ICE focused on their priorities—people who are human traffickers and dangers to our communities. Congress should:
 - Repeal or reform mandatory detention laws;
 - End the appropriations mandate that 34,000 beds be filled each day;
 - Increase appropriations for community-based alternatives to detention.
- **The Administration can take action** by changing their approach to detention. They should:
 - Expand the use of community-based alternatives like ours;
 - Create and implement policies and regulations to avoid detention unless legally necessary;
 - Ensure that detention is only used in cases when the U.S. government has proven that none of the less restrictive alternatives is appropriate.

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